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www.gracehealth.com

Living with

Learning how to control the spread of
MRSA
Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus
(MRSA)



GRACE VISITING NURSES

MRSA is a serious infection that can become life-threatening if left untreated. If you or someone in your family has been diagnosed with MRSA, there are steps you need to take now to avoid spreading it to your family and friends. Physical pain and emotional stress can be caused by MRSA, but it can be managed. This booklet tells you how you can live with MRSA.

Table of Contents

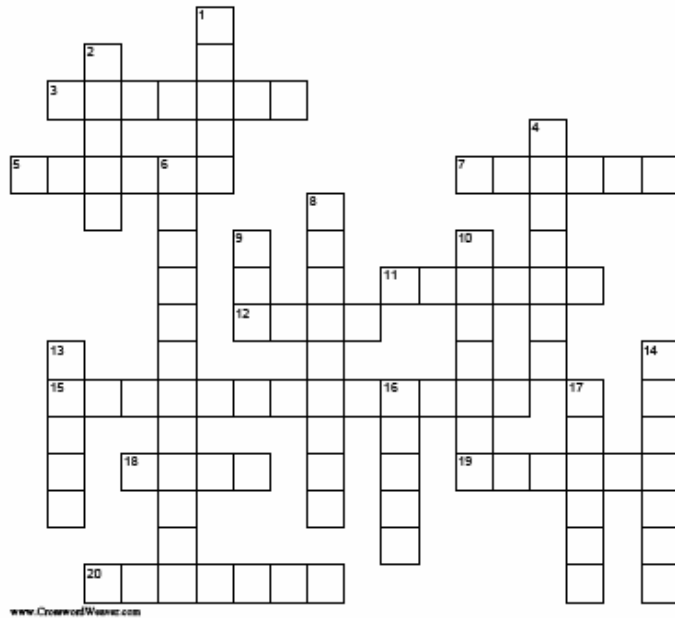
Living with MRSA.....	3
What is MRSA and why is it so serious?.....	3
What does MRSA look like?.....	3
How did I get MRSA?.....	4
How contagious am I?.....	5
Will I always have MRSA?.....	5
Is there a test for MRSA?.....	5
If I have MRSA, do I need to do anything special when I go to a clinic or hospital?.....	6
Treating MRSA.....	6
How is MRSA treated?.....	6
Caring for Yourself.....	8
Does it matter how I wash my hands?.....	8
Do I need to be careful when I do laundry?.....	9
What about cleaning my house?.....	10
Disinfectants to use.....	11
How do I change my bandages?.....	12
Personal Care Guidelines.....	12
Controlling MRSA.....	14
How do I stop MRSA from spreading when I have an <u>active infection</u> ?.....	14
How do I stop MRSA from spreading when I'm a carrier?.....	15
Children and MRSA.....	16
Pets and MRSA.....	16
Resources.....	17
Shopping List.....	17
Web Sites.....	17

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Our services offered include:

- ✚ Physical, Occupational, and Speech Therapy
- ✚ Pediatric Nursing
- ✚ Telemonitoring
- ✚ Wound Care/Wound Vac
- ✚ Anodyne Therapy
- ✚ Ventilators/Trach Care
- ✚ Central Line Care
- ✚ PICC Line Care
- ✚ IV/TPN Therapy
- ✚ IVIG/Respigam

Staph Infections



www.CrosswordWeaver.com

ACROSS

- 3 What do you need to cover an infected sore with?
- 5 Kills staph
- 7 Sores infected by MRSA may look like what kind of bites?
- 11 Wear these when changing bandage
- 12 Staph can be found on a persons
- 15 Decrease the amount of bacteria on your skin by using a certain type of soap
- 18 Do this to hands before and after changing a bandage
- 19 You can spread MRSA by sharing these
- 20 A sign that a sore is infected

DOWN

- 1 A common bacteria carried in the nares of many people are called _____ aureas
- 2 Carry alcohol sanitizer when this is not available
- 4 Wash hands for how many seconds
- 6 Staph is transmitted from person to person by _____ hands.
- 8 An antibiotic that is no longer effective is called this
- 9 A sign that a sore is infected
- 10 Do not participate in what type of sports until the wound is healed?
- 13 How often should you change clothes
- 14 What type of bag do you use to dispose of the old dressing?
- 16 A personal used item that should not be shared
- 17 Never do this to a boil

WORD BANK: Antibacterial, bandage, bleach, contact, contaminated, daily, fifteen, gloves, plastic, pus, razor, redness, resistant, skin, spider, squeeze, staph, towels, wash, water.

Please see our website for solution to crossword: www.gracehealth.com

Living with MRSA

Learning how to control the spread of Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA)

What is MRSA and why is it so serious?

Staphylococcus or “staph” bacteria is a germ that lives on the skin and in the nose. Staph bacteria usually does not cause any harm. However, sometimes these germs can get inside the body through a break in the skin and cause an infection. These infections are usually treated with antibiotics. When the infection does not respond to common antibiotics, this could indicate MRSA. This type of staph is called MRSA (Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus).

MRSA can be a very contagious infection. It can range from mild to very serious, even life threatening. MRSA can be spread to others by skin to skin contact. If one person in your family has MRSA it is very likely that others in the family will also become infected.

MRSA was first identified in the 1960’s and was mainly found in hospitals and nursing homes. This was discovered when patients were not taking antibiotics correctly and they were being given when not needed. In the late 1990’s, a new type of MRSA was identified. This type of MRSA is becoming more common among children and adults who do not have medical problems.

What does MRSA look like?

MRSA usually causes infections on the skin. These infections may make sores on the skin that are hard and red. A cut may become swollen, hot and filled with pus. Blisters or boils may also form. Blistered filled with fluid are called impetigo and large, red, painful bumps under the skin are called boils.

It is also possible to have MRSA in other areas of the body, such as blood, lungs, eyes, and urine. These types of infections are less common, although often more serious. This booklet focuses on skin infections because they are more common.

How did I get MRSA?

MRSA can be spread the same way you can get a cold. Anyone can get MRSA by touching someone or something that has the bacteria on it and then touching yourself. Hand washing often reduces the risk of getting MRSA.

Ways to increase your chances of getting MRSA:

- You take antibiotics without a prescription
- You don't follow directions while taking antibiotics, such as stopping early or missing doses.
- You take antibiotics frequently.

Ways to get MRSA

- Using personal items of someone who has MRSA, such as towels, wash cloths, clothes, or athletic equipment
- Touching the infected skin of someone who has MRSA
- Touching objects, such as public phones, or doorknobs that have MRSA bacteria on the surface.
- Being in crowded places where germs are easily spread, such as hospitals, nursing homes, daycares, or college dorms.

changing bandages. Consider keeping children separated from the pet until its sores have healed.

Resources

Shopping List

These items can be found at most drug stores or grocery stores:

- Disposable gloves
- Tissues
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Antibacterial soap (if your health care provider recommends it)
- Disinfectant
- Bleach
- Plastic trash bags

Web Sites

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Management of multidrug-resistant organisms in healthcare settings, Siegel JD, Rhinehart E, Jackson M, Chiarello L, et al. 2006.

www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/pdf/ar/mdroGuideline2006.pdf.

Texas State Department of Health

www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/health/antibiotic_resistance/educational/whatyouneedtoknowstaph.pdf

English: www.mrsatexas.org

Spanish: www.mrsatexas.org

Local Health Department

Look in your phone book to find the telephone number, or search the internet for county and health department.

- Shower well with soap before and after using a public sauna, hot tub, or pool.
- Shower immediately after participating in sports, or working out at the gym.
- Shower before any intimate skin-to-skin contact with another person. Showering will reduce the amount of bacteria on your skin and reduce the risk of spreading bacteria to the other person.

Children and MRSA

If you have MRSA and there are children in your life, you can still interact with them. Washing your hands and preventing children from coming in contact with your infections are the best ways to avoid spreading MRSA. Closely follow the “Personal Care Guidelines,” especially when children are present. Make sure children wash their hands, too.

If a child in your family has MRSA, teach the child what it means to have a contagious infection. Your child is likely to be in contact with other children. If your child is in daycare, make a plan with the daycare provider to reduce the risk of spreading MRSA to other children. If your child is in school, make a plan with the school nurse.

Pets and MRSA

Pets, such as dogs and cats, can also get MRSA. Pets can have active infections or they can be carriers. If you keep getting MRSA infections, or if you see any signs of a skin infection on your pet, talk with your vet about testing your pet. Pets with MRSA can be treated. You do not need to get rid of your pet. If your pet is diagnosed with MRSA, then the “Personal Care Guidelines” previously stated apply to your pet as well. Do not touch your pet’s infections and make sure to wear gloves when

You are at greater risk of getting MRSA if you are recovering from surgery or burns, have tubes in your body for medical treatment, or if you share needles.

How contagious am I?

MRSA carriers have the bacteria on their skin and in the nose. The bacteria can be spread to other people through things that you touch or use if you don’t wash your hands. MRSA can also be found in the liquid that comes out of your nose or mouth when you cough or sneeze.

Always remember, if you have MRSA it is possible to spread it to family, friends, other people close to you, and even to pets. Washing your hands and preventing others from coming in contact with your infections are the best ways to avoid spreading MRSA.

Will I always have MRSA?

Many people who have active infections are treated and no longer have MRSA. Sometimes MRSA goes away after treatment and comes back several times. Consult your health care provider if MRSA infections keep coming back to sort out the reason why.

You can still have MRSA bacteria on your skin and in your nose even if active infections go away. This means you are a carrier of MRSA. It is not understood why you can be a carrier and not get infections but can still spread the infection to others.

Is there a test for MRSA?

You would not usually be tested for MRSA unless you have an active infection. Skin infections are tested by your health care provider taking a sample of the fluid called a culture. The test will show which antibiotic is best for you. If your MRSA infections keep coming back again and again, your health care

provider may test you or your family members to see if you are carriers. In this case, the provider would take a culture sample from the nose, where MRSA is often found.

If I have MRSA, do I need to do anything special when I go to a clinic or hospital?

Tell all your healthcare providers if you have an active case or a carrier of MRSA. The healthcare team will take precautions by washing their hands and wearing gloves when caring for you. They may also wear a gown to prevent getting the bacteria on their clothes. If you are coughing, they may wear a mask or ask you to wear one. They will always wear gloves when caring for a sore.

A “SpecialPrecautions” card may be put on the door of your room if you are staying in the hospital or nursing home. This card alerts staff to use extra care to prevent the spread of MRSA. Visitors that come may be instructed to avoid touching your skin and use infection control precautions.

Will I need to wear a mask?

Your health care provider may wear a mask or ask you to wear one during visits.

Treating MRSA

How is MRSA treated?

If you do not have an active infection, your health care provider may do tests to find out if you still carry MRSA bacteria on your skin. If you are a MRSA carrier, your provider may decide to do nothing. Sometimes the bacteria will go away if not active.

If you have an active infection, your provider may choose one or more of the following treatments:

1. Drain the infection

- Be especially careful if you are around people who have weak immune systems, such as newborn babies, the elderly, or anyone with a chronic disease. If they get MRSA, it can make them very ill.
- Be careful if you are around someone who has a skin condition, such as eczema, or someone who just had surgery. They may be more likely to get an infection.
- If MRSA is in your urine or feces, clean your bathroom well. If other people handle your urine or feces, they should wear gloves and wash their hands well afterwards.
- Do not participate in contact sports until your sores have healed (sweating can cause a bandage to loosen and lead to contact with equipment and other people).
- Do not go to a public gym, sauna, hot tub or pool until sores have healed.
- Do not get manicures, massages, or hair cuts until sores have healed.

How do I stop MRSA from spreading when I’m a carrier?

- Follow the “Personal Care Guidelines” previously stated.
- If you go to a gym, disinfect all equipment after using it. This is standard policy for gyms, and the gym should supply disinfectant.

- Tell your health care providers that you have had MRSA in the past.
- If you work in a health care setting, you may need to take special precautions. Consult with your employer.

Controlling MRSA

How do I stop MRSA from spreading when I have an active infection?

- Follow the “Personal Care Guidelines” previously stated.
- Do not poke or squeeze the sores.
- Do not touch sores, especially ones that cannot be covered with a bandage or clothing, such as sores on your face. If you do touch a sore, wash your hands immediately.
- Cover any infected sores with a bandage. Follow the steps under “How do I change my bandages?” previously stated. Wash your hands immediately after putting on the bandage.
- If you have a leaking sore, put extra dressings over it to keep the drainage from leaking through. Be careful not to get any pus or body fluids on surfaces or other people.
- Wear clothes that cover your bandages or sores, if possible.

2. Give antibiotics
3. Reduce the amount of bacteria on your skin.

1. Drain the infection.

Don’t do this yourself. Squeezing or poking on a wound infection can make the infection much worse. Draining the infection should only be done by a trained health care professional.

The provider will open the sore and drain it. After the infection is drained, you must keep it covered until it heals. Sometimes your provider may ask you to come back for a checkup or to change the dressing. This is to make sure it is healing okay. Some skin infections will heal after your health care provider has drained the pus out. You may not need an antibiotic.

2. Reduce the amount of bacteria on your skin or in your nose may prevent the spread of MRSA.

The provider may have you follow these steps for a short period of time:

- Have you shower daily with antibacterial soap
- Prescribe antibiotic pills
- Prescribe antibiotic ointment to put in your nose for several days

3. Give antibiotics

There are antibiotics that can treat MRSA and make it go

If your provider gives you antibiotics:

Take them exactly as prescribed. Do not stop early, even if you feel better. The last few pills kill the toughest germs.

away. MRSA is resistant to many antibiotics so it can be difficult to treat. The provider may culture the area and see which antibiotic is right for you. Always take your antibiotics exactly as prescribed. The last few pills kill the toughest germs. Never take antibiotics without a prescription from your health care provider.

What if the infection does not get better?

Return to the healthcare provider as soon as possible for extended treatment.

Caring for Yourself

Keep yourself clean and practice good hygiene to reduce the amount of bacteria on your skin. Ways of practicing good hygiene is to shower daily and wash your hands several times daily. **Washing your hands is the number one way to stop the spread of MRSA bacteria.**

Does it matter how I wash my hands?

YES, you have to wash carefully to get rid of the bacteria. Also, you can spread MRSA to people you live with if you share towels. Make sure you have your

Always wash your hands thoroughly:

- Before preparing food, eating, or drinking
- Before and after touching your eyes, nose, mouth, genitals, sores, acne, boils, or rashes
- Before and after changing bandages
- Before and after smoking
- Before and after blowing your nose
- After touching urine, feces, and body fluids – this includes items soiled with body fluids, such as bedding
- After cleaning the bathroom, changing your bedding, and doing laundry
- After going to the bathroom
- After coughing or sneezing
- After touching things other people touch, such as phones, door knobs, or shopping carts.

- Carry alcohol-based hand gel with you so you can sanitize your hands if soap and water are not available.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in a wastebasket and wash your hands.
- Take a bath or shower every day. This will help reduce the amount of bacteria on your skin.
- Keep your fingernails short to keep the bacteria from growing under and on your nails.
- Change your sheets and towels regularly.
- Change your clothes daily and wash them before wearing them again.
- Do not share towels, razors, toothbrushes, or other personal items.
- Take good care of your skin. Remember, MRSA lives on your skin. Any break or crack in your skin can allow it to enter and cause an infection. If you get a cut or scrape, clean it with soap and water and then cover it with a bandage.
- Take care of yourself: eat right, exercise, quit smoking, and avoid stress.
- Get medical care at the first sign of an infection in a cut, such as redness, swelling, pain, or pus.

Never mix bleach with other cleaners, especially ammonia. Keep the bleach solution away from children and don't put it in bottles that could be mistaken for something to drink.

How do I change my bandages?

1. Wash your hands well with soap and warm water.
2. Put on disposable gloves.
3. Remove the old bandage.
4. Put the old bandage into a plastic bag. Take off the gloves and put them in the plastic bag, too.
5. Wash and dry your hands.
6. Put on a new, clean pair of gloves.
7. Apply the new bandage. If you have a leaking sore, apply extra dressings over it to keep the drainage from leaking through.
8. Take off the second pair of gloves and put them in the plastic bag. Seal or tie up the bag and throw it away in your regular trash.
9. Wash and dry your hands.

Personal Care Guidelines

- Wash your hands frequently.

own hand towel to dry your hands on.

This is the hand washing method recommended by health care providers:

- Wet your hands first under warm running water.
- Apply soap and rub together for at least 15 seconds, getting between the fingers and around the nails.
- Rinse with warm running water.
- Dry with a paper towel or hand towel.
- Turn the faucet off using a paper towel or hand towel (remember, your hands were dirty when you turned the faucet on).
- Throw the paper towel in the trash. If you are using a hand towel, do not share it with other people and wash it often.

Anti-bacterial soap would be best to use, but ask your health care provider. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that you can buy in any drug store. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers will kill the bacteria within 15 seconds after you rub it on your hands. Your hands must be fairly clean for the sanitizer to work. Don't use the hand sanitizers to clean surfaces or objects. Look for a sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.

Do I need to be careful when I do laundry?

Yes. Dirty clothes and bedding can spread MRSA bacteria.

- Hold the dirty laundry away from your body and clothes to prevent getting any bacteria on your clothes.

- Wear disposable gloves to handle laundry that is soiled with body fluids, like drainage from a sore, urine or feces. Immediately put the laundry into the washer or into a plastic bag until it can be washed.
- Wash you laundry with warm or hot water. Use bleach if possible.
- Dry in a warm or hot dryer and make sure the clothes are completely dry.
- Throw gloves away after taking them off. Do not reuse them
- Wash your hands after handling dirty sheets or clothing and before handling clean laundry, even if you have been wearing gloves.

How often should I change clothes and bedding?

- Change your sheets and towels regularly
- Change your clothes daily
- Do not put dirty clothes or clothes you have just worn back in your closet or drawers until they have been washed

What about cleaning my house?

Use a disinfectant to regularly clean surfaces. Wipe the surface or object with the disinfectant and let it dry. Pay attention to items that are frequently touched – light switches, doorknobs, phones, toilets, sinks, tubs, kitchen counters, cell phones, pagers, and computer keyboards. If body fluids or pus get onto surfaces, you need to do the following:

1. Put on disposable gloves.

2. Wipe up the fluids with a paper towel.
3. Throw the paper towel in the trash.
4. Clean the surface thoroughly using disinfectant and a paper towel.
5. Throw the paper towel in the trash.
6. Then wipe the surface again with the disinfectant and let dry for at least 30 seconds.
7. Throw the paper towel in the trash.
8. Remove your gloves and throw them in the trash.
9. Wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Disinfectants to use

- Use any cleaner you can buy at the store that has the word “disinfectant” on it. Always read the label and follow directions.
- Make your own solution of bleach and water: Mix one tablespoon bleach into one quart of water in a spray bottle and label it “bleach solution.” Make it fresh each time you plan to clean because the bleach evaporates out of the water making it less effective.

How often should I clean?
MRSA bacteria can live on surfaces for days, weeks, and months. It is important to clean regularly. For items or surfaces you touch frequently, clean them every day.